

Dear Santa Fe County residents,

Our last meeting of the County Commissioners had a number of important issues which I will detail below. I will give some background, as well as explaining why I voted the way I did.

Unfortunately for you, the avid TV fans who watch BCC meetings, the last one was not broadcast, nor was it recorded, because there was a power outage at the County that fried our electronics equipment the weekend before. This demonstrates why it is important to have accurate meeting minutes and voice-recording capability.

The three issues that I would like to highlight in these notes are (1) the somewhat controversial sale of Rio Grande water to The Club at Las Campanas, (2) a resolution in support of an adequate budget for our Open Space and Trails Department, and (3) a resolution in support of the budding film and media industry in Santa Fe County.

As always, please feel free to pass this message along to whomever you think might be interested. (Anybody who is not on my list and who would like to be should let me know.)

Sincerely,  
-Kathy

### **Water Sale Agreement with The Club at Las Campanas:**

The agreement that the Board of County Commissioners approved with The Club at Las Campanas (TCLC) calls for County Utilities to provide up to 550 acre-feet per year (AFY) of raw water pumped directly from the Rio Grande. The Club

has in fact already installed a large portion of the infrastructure for this water transmission to happen. By virtue of this agreement, the County will commit the water rights necessary to provide the service to the Club. TCLC had the ability to procure their own raw water from the Rio Grande, by merely purchasing the water rights in the open market. I want to emphasize that this could happen whether or not the County agreed to provide water. On the other hand, by taking the Club at Las Campanas Club as a customer, the County will have better control of the water being pumped out of the river, and be better positioned for future purchases of water rights in the open market.

Currently the County owns 3266 AFY of water rights that could be effected by pumping out of the Rio Grande. Its water rights are as follows: 1271 AFY of native Rio Grande rights, 500 AFY from the City, 375 AFY of San Juan-Chama, 709 AFY formerly owned by Las Campanas, and 411 AFY deeded to the County by developers. It is important to note that we only anticipate providing about 1360 AFY to customers of the County Water Utility by 2016. At this point in time, the County is only using 586 AFY -- well below what we have rights to divert from the river. It is also important to note that the County has 1700 AFY of diversionary capacity associated to the facilities known as the Buckman Direct Diversion (BDD). In any event, the County owns way, way more water rights than it can currently use for water to be used by its customers, and its use by 2016 would also be well below the share of capacity it owns at BDD. Incidentally, the agreement requires that TCLC provides its own diversionary capacity, which they have, by

virtue of having executed a transfer from TCLC's parent company, Las Campanas Partnership.

Right now, TCLC is currently watering its golf courses with City's treated wastewater effluent (450 AFY), Las Campanas Coop's treated wastewater effluent (50 AFY), and potable water from City wells (100 AFY). So going to a system of using raw water from the Rio Grande will free up the City's treated effluent, as well as their use of City's potable water. As Las Campanas development expands, they will have access to more and more of Las Campanas Coop treated effluent. However, the agreement requires that they pay the County for (at the very least) 300 AFY, whether they need it or not. In addition, if any of the 600 AFY capacity of the pipeline is not used for the TCLC golf course, the County will have to right to deliver that to other customers. In fact, Commissioner Anaya has brought up the concept of somehow using that surplus capacity to bring water to help our farming communities.

It is important to note that guaranteed income of this type can be used as leverage for capital that would fund other projects within our County and increase the County's water service area. For example, we could use that money to extend our pipelines to reach other communities in our rural areas that are suffering from not enough water or from water polluted by nitrates, arsenic, radium and uranium, to name a few pollutants. We could also help communities that have failing infrastructure that needs replacing, and for which funds do not currently exist to pay for upgrades (Glorieta, for example).

Also, we know that certain communities are using so much groundwater that other communities "downstream" from them are drying out. This is not sustainable.

I find it useful to think of our underground aquifer as a giant flowing body of water moving generally from the East (in the mountains where it is replenished by snowpack) to the West. Communities that are in the foothills of the mountains have the first access to our aquifer. Then, as one moves toward the West, access to the aquifer is diminished according to how much water is being used "upstream." We know that we are using water unsustainably, as evidenced by the drying out of areas in the western part of our County (e.g., La Cienega). We need to retire some of the wells in our County in order to stop this process, something that we can do with water from our BDD project.

I think it is important to have as many different options in our water portfolio as possible, including collecting more water from the roofs of homes, and using gray water. To that end, the concept of low-interest loan programs comes to mind, which could help residents in our communities install safe and reliable drinking water systems. In addition, we could look to expand our collective ability to recycle water. These would be an infrastructure investments that would pay off in the near and long term future.

In general, I believe we should use less groundwater in the County on an ongoing basis and save it for emergencies. Using the water out of the Rio Grande in good times, and having wells as back-up for the bad times, is the most sustainable option.

## **Open Space and Trails Program:**

Three times since 1998, the residents of Santa Fe County have approved bond issues at the ballot box for purchase of land and easements to be used for open space, parks, and trails. In addition, the ballot measure for the County Capital Outlay Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) specified that a certain portion of those monies also be used for open space and trails. These ballot issues passed with resounding margins -- on the order of 70% in favor. I am very proud that our community has been so supportive of maintaining the beauty of our lands. But by voting for these measures, I feel that the County now has taken on a responsibility to develop these properties for public access, where appropriate, and to take care of the lands that contain sensitive historic, archaeological, or environmental spaces.

Developing and maintaining the County lands requires money and staff. Unfortunately, by law, capital monies can only be used for purchasing properties and developing infrastructure, not for ongoing maintenance.

There are several illustrations of this problem in the County: In Edgewood, the County has purchased a 30-acre property with the intent to build an equestrian facility. We have the funds budgeted for this, but we have only planned the first phase of development, because we do not have enough staff to maintain and run the facility, once it is fully built out. Just recently the County also purchased (at a very good price) a parcel of land off Brownell Howland Road. The plan for this property is to construct a trail that will connect the Dale Ball network to the Little Tesuque Creek County Open Space (the beginning of

more trails to the north). We are very fortunate that the Santa Fe Conservation Trust has agreed to provide volunteers and funding to construct the trail, but we still need County staff to oversee the project -- we can't proceed until we have staff available for this important task. We have also purchased a number of parcels of land that are slated to become parks. Again, we often have the funds to develop the parks, but not enough staff to effectively maintain them.

To remedy this situation, I sponsored a resolution at the recommendation of the County Open Land and Trails Planning Advisory Committee (COLTPAC). The resolution sets the following policies, directing that:

- 1) County management include adequate staffing and funding for operation and maintenance of our open spaces and parks, and

- 2) Open Space and Trails Program staff work with the Trust for Public Land to develop strategies to find continuing funding for operations and maintenance.

The resolution passed unanimously. I am pleased that the Board recognizes that we in County government have a responsibility to the people of our community to maintain the open spaces, parks, and trails that are now a vital part of our lives.

### **Film Industry in Santa Fe County:**

Commissioner Vigil sponsored a resolution to support economic development activities in Santa Fe County for the film and media industry, as a means towards achieving a sustainable local

economy and towards stimulating local job creation. This resolution passed unanimously.

The resolution coincided with the opening of the Santa Fe Film and Media Studios off of Highway 14 -- a major achievement, in that there were a number of political roadblocks that had to be overcome to make these studios a reality. But now the Studios are open, and a number of film and television productions have already contracted to use the space in the coming year.

Since 2003, there have been more than 60 major television and film productions in Santa Fe County. It is estimated that there have been roughly \$250 million in direct expenditures and \$750 million in indirect expenditures due to these activities. The average wages for people working on the films have been in the range of \$23 to \$28 per hour. In addition, in order to support the film industry, Santa Fe Community College has established a robust educational program in the areas related to film production. Movie and TV productions have become an important part of our community in many ways.

Interestingly, New Mexico has been rated by industry insiders as the third best location for filmmaking in North America (after Los Angeles and New York), despite the resistance by some politicians at the State level.

Through the Sustainable Growth Management Plan, the County has identified the film industry as one of the targeted cluster industries for active promotion. What this means in a practical sense is that the County will help with policies, infrastructure, and workforce development where possible. So far, the County has created a Media District within the Community College

District, with the purpose of providing a place where all types of media businesses, including the film industry, can establish their base. The County has also approved via ordinance that the Santa Fe Studios is a Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) project, as required for the County to help with financing and to provide some of the required infrastructure. In fact, I have reported on the particulars of what the County has provided to the Santa Fe Studios project in the past, and I can resend that to anyone who is interested.

I feel that the film industry fits in with the creative talents of our community in a way that almost no other type of business could. In addition, the filming of movies and television shows leads to numerous spin-off local businesses. Just consider the seemingly interminable credits that roll by at the end of any modern-day movie. At a time when youth unemployment is at its highest rate since World War II, the filming industry, in partnership with the Community College, provides a real ray of hope for lifelong careers for our local young people.

-Kathy Holian  
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